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Ethiopia and Eritrea

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1312 (2000) of 31 July 2000, in which the Council, *inter alia*, authorized the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). Under that resolution, the Council also requested me to continue planning for a peacekeeping operation, to begin the administrative measures for assembling the mission and to provide periodic reports, as necessary, on its establishment and work.

2. The present report reflects the findings of the reconnaissance mission, which, as noted in my report to the Security Council of 30 June 2000 (S/2000/643), was dispatched to the region to discuss with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the parties the modalities of possible United Nations assistance for the implementation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities signed by Ethiopia and Eritrea in Algiers on 18 June 2000 (see S/2000/601). It provides a concept of operations and recommendations for the expansion of UNMEE. The present report also provides an update on political and humanitarian developments since my report of 2 June 2000 (S/2000/530).

II. Political developments

3. In my report dated 30 June 2000 (S/2000/643), I informed the Security Council that Ethiopia and Eritrea had signed the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities on 18 June 2000. On 28 July 2000, the Secretary General of OAU reported that OAU, in its decision on the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea made at the thirty-sixth ordinary session of OAU heads of State and Government, held in Lomé from 10 to 12 July 2000, *inter alia*, encouraged the two parties to pursue negotiations on the outstanding issues under the auspices of OAU in order to achieve a lasting peace. The Heads of State and Government also requested the Security Council to take the necessary steps for the speedy deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission provided for in the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities.

4. Efforts to reach an agreement on the outstanding issues are continuing, and during the latest round of proximity talks held in Washington, D.C., on 3, 5 and 6 July 2000, the parties discussed modalities for the delimitation and demarcation of the border and the issue of compensation. The talks were adjourned without a formal statement on the outcome of the deliberations.

III. Humanitarian developments

Eritrea

5. The humanitarian situation in Eritrea has changed dramatically since the United Nations country team appeal of January 2000. In the first half of 2000, there was a rapid exodus of populations away from the war zone. The Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission reported that the number of internally displaced persons and other war-affected persons increased from 371,910 in January 2000 to more than 1.1 million in June 2000. The hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons living in camps or settlements near host communities are placing a tremendous burden on

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socio-economic mechanisms. Furthermore, some 94,000 Eritreans, almost exclusively from the Gash Barka region, have sought refuge in the Sudan since May 2000.

6. With the conclusion of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and the expected deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Governments of the Sudan and Eritrea signed a tripartite agreement on 4 July 2000 for the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees. The number of spontaneous returnees has already accelerated to several hundred per day and is expected to continue to rise as refugees seek to take advantage of the time remaining for the planting season, to the extent that they have safe access to their agricultural lands. Assistance will be provided to refugees who wish to be repatriated. However, even in the best-case scenario, immediate return for many is impossible as a result of the destruction of homes, basic infrastructure, loss of crops and household assets, lack of social services and the presence of landmines.

7. The response by the international community to the January 2000 United Nations country team appeal was modest, with only 39.2 per cent of the appeal funded as of 1 July 2000. Consequently, projects and contingency plans were not as effective and far-reaching as required for a rapid response at the onset of the emergency in May 2000. The revised appeal, launched in July 2000, calls for $87.3 million to address humanitarian needs for 1.1 million war-affected Eritreans, including food, shelter, water and sanitation and essential drugs, and brings together the relief aid requirements of eight United Nations agencies.

8. The prospect that relief food stocks will run out by September 2000 is a cause of major concern. Although there is food in the pipeline, it will not be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the populations in need after that date. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the rainy season has started, and there is an urgent need to procure and distribute humanitarian assistance.

Ethiopia

9. In Ethiopia, the severe drought has caused significant migrations, increased malnutrition, large livestock losses, a higher incidence of diseases and an increase in the overall vulnerability of the rural population. As of early July 2000, the Government of Ethiopia estimated that over 10 million people were in need of emergency food assistance.

10. As a result of the war with Eritrea, some 500 civilian deaths were reported in Tigray, 750 children were orphaned and the whereabouts of 641 civilians remains unknown. Schools, hospitals and other parts of the community infrastructure have been destroyed or damaged. Four farming seasons have already been lost, and more than 70,000 hectares of land rendered uncultivable and unproductive due to the presence of landmines. Although the Ethiopian Government and humanitarian partners are anxious to support the return of the remaining internally displaced persons to their homes in border areas, landmines and unexploded ordnance remain a serious impediment to resettlement activities. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 167 people, mostly children, have been reported killed or injured by landmines since February 2000.

11. The renewed hostilities in May 2000 generated three new categories of vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance: Ethiopian nationals separated from their homes in Ethiopia during the war who moved to displaced persons camps in Eritrea and are currently being assisted with a view to their voluntary repatriation under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); Ethiopian nationals resident in Eritrea prior to May 2000 who are being repatriated to Tigray; and Eritrean and other third-country nationals who have sought asylum in Ethiopia as refugees.

12. In June 2000, a two-week needs assessment mission organized by the United Nations country team in Ethiopia visited for the first time the contested areas of Badme and Zala Ambesa. For the previous two years, those areas had remained inaccessible to the humanitarian community as a result of insecurity and intermittent fighting. The assessment mission focused on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war-affected area and on the needs of the war-affected population. Particular attention was drawn to the need to improve the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, such as human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), especially in the light of the massive population movements, military occupation and future demobilization of soldiers.

IV. United Nations mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

A. Proposed mandate

13. As envisaged in my report of 30 June 2000 (S/2000/643), liaison officers have been deployed to each capital. They are currently consulting the parties' military headquarters and OAU to prepare for the deployment of UNMEE in accordance with Security Council resolution 1312 (2000) of 31 July 2000. The deployment of the military observers, administrative support and other civilian personnel authorized under that resolution will begin shortly.

14. The multidisciplinary reconnaissance mission, led by Major-General Timothy Ford of Australia, former Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), visited the region from 4 to 18 July 2000. It included political, military, legal, humanitarian, logistic and public information officers from the Secretariat. Representatives of OAU, UNHCR and the Standing High Readiness Brigade joined the reconnaissance mission in the field. The mission met with senior representatives of both Governments, visited key sites at the front line, and met with the diplomatic and humanitarian communities in both countries. Before leaving the region, General Ford met the Secretary-General of OAU, Salim Ahmed Salim, and briefed him on the Mission's findings.

15. In accordance with the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, which was circulated as a document of the Security Council on 19 June 2000, and on the basis of the reconnaissance mission's findings, it is envisaged that the mandate of the expanded United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea would be to:

(a) Monitor the cessation of hostilities;

(b) Assist, as appropriate, in ensuring the observance of the security commitments agreed by the parties;

(c) Monitor and verify the redeployment of Ethiopian forces from positions taken after 6 February 1999, which were not under Ethiopian administration before 6 May 1998;

(d) Monitor the positions of Ethiopian forces once redeployed;

(e) Simultaneously, monitor the positions of Eritrean forces that are to remain at a distance of 25 km from positions to which Ethiopian forces shall redeploy;

(f) Monitor the temporary security zone to assist in ensuring compliance with the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities;

(g) Chair the Military Coordination Commission to be established in accordance with the Agreement;

(h) Coordinate and provide technical assistance for humanitarian mine action activities in the temporary security zone and areas adjacent to it;

(i) Coordinate the peacekeeping mission's activities in the temporary security zone and areas adjacent to it with humanitarian activities in those areas.

B. Structure and concept of operations

16. UNMEE would be composed of political, military, public information, mine action and administrative components, and would include a mechanism for the coordination of its activities with those of the humanitarian community. UNMEE's area of operations would be composed of the temporary security zone and areas adjacent to it.

17. UNMEE would be headed by my special representative, who would have overall authority for the activities of the mission and of the United Nations system in the temporary security zone and areas adjacent to it. The special representative would maintain close contact with the political and military leadership of the Governments of Ethiopia and of Eritrea, OAU and the United Nations country teams in both countries. In consultation with OAU and the parties, it is envisaged that my special representative would have observer status at the proximity talks to be conducted with the parties in order to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict. That would ensure that the United Nations is kept abreast of any information and developments that could affect the implementation of the UNMEE mandate.

18. To ensure effective implementation of the mandate of UNMEE, the special representative and force commander would maintain offices at Asmara and Addis Ababa. Regional headquarters would also be established in Eritrea, at Mendefera, and in Ethiopia, at Mekele, to maintain close links with the local

authorities of both countries. The main support base of the mission would be located in Asmara, given the proximity of the city to UNMEE's area of operations, its significant air and sea transport facilities, and the need to ensure cost-effectiveness.

Political component

19. The political component of the mission would assist the special representative in liaison with the parties; address any political issues which may arise in the implementation of the Mission's mandate; maintain liaison with OAU; keep abreast of all political developments which may have an impact on the implementation of the Mission's mandate; provide daily and other reports to United Nations Headquarters; and assist in the coordination of activities and information sharing with the United Nations country teams, as appropriate.

Military component

20. The main military tasks of UNMEE would be to monitor observance of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities; to confirm the redeployment of Ethiopian troops from positions taken after 6 February 1999 that were not under Ethiopian administration before 6 May 1998; to confirm that Eritrean troops remain at a distance of 25 km (artillery range) from the positions to which Ethiopian forces shall redeploy; and to supervise the temporary security zone to ensure that there is no military presence from either side. Those tasks would be carried out with the support of the Military Coordination Commission. They would require continuous liaison with the parties' military headquarters at corps and division/regiment levels; incident investigations; challenge inspections; land and air patrols; and the monitoring of the temporary security zone from checkpoints and observations posts deployed in key and sensitive areas.

21. The military component of UNMEE would be headed by a force commander at the rank of Major-General, who would be assisted by a deputy force commander at the rank of Brigadier-General.

22. The Military Coordination Commission would be one of the main instruments for addressing the military concerns of the parties and for consultation with them on the activities of the peacekeeping mission. As agreed with the parties, the Commission would be established jointly by the United Nations and OAU, and would be chaired by UNMEE, with representation from the parties and OAU. It is expected that the Commission would hold both high-level and working-level meetings, on a regular basis, as well as special meetings, as required. It is also expected that the initial high-level meetings of the Commission might take place in a third country, with working-level meetings taking place in or near the temporary security zone. When appropriate, UNMEE would provide secure transportation for the parties to Commission meetings held in or near the temporary security zone. UNMEE would also provide the secretariat for the Commission. The Force Commander would commence consultations with OAU and the parties on the establishment of the Commission as soon as he were deployed to the region.

23. Given the difficult terrain and weather conditions, the significant length of the temporary security zone from East to West and the requirement that the parties be confident that the area is effectively monitored, a combination of military observers and formed troops would be required to carry out the mission's tasks. It is estimated that UNMEE would require a total military strength of to 4,200 personnel, including 220 military observers, three infantry battalions and the necessary support units.

24. The area of operations would be divided into three sectors, with sector boundaries running approximately North to South so that all levels of command and liaison could operate on each side of the temporary security zone (see map). Sector headquarters would be located at Barentu (West), Adigrat (Central) and Assab (East). Each sector would be composed of a military observer group and one infantry battalion.

25. The primary tasks of the military observer group in each sector would be the provision of continuous liaison to the parties' military headquarters at corps and division/regiment levels, incident investigations, challenge inspections and patrolling. It is expected that each sector would have a military observer group of up to 60 observers, depending upon the size and positions of the parties at each sector.

26. The battalions' primary tasks would be to maintain static checkpoints, particularly in key and sensitive areas, and to provide security for members of the MCC. Each infantry battalion would include a headquarters company; a support company; two to four rifle companies, depending on the sector; and a sufficient number of wheeled APCs. Given the terrain

and positions of the forces of both parties, it is expected that the infantry battalions would have 890 troops (all ranks) in Sector West and Sector Centre and 610 troops (all ranks) in Sector East. A company-size mobile reserve force of 195 troops (all ranks) would also be needed for the rapid establishment of temporary observation posts and checkpoints, as required.

27. In order to carry out its tasks, the mission would require engineering assets, consisting of a construction engineer company and three field engineer companies, primarily tasked for mine clearance. Each engineering company would have 195 troops (all ranks). The force headquarters would consist of 40 military observers to carry out staff functions as well as 165 troops (all ranks). In addition, a military police unit of 80 (all ranks), a guard and administration company of 190 (all ranks), a level-II medical unit of 90 (all ranks), and a transport unit of 95 (all ranks) would be required.

28. Due to the poor road infrastructure, the large area of operations, as well as patrol, logistic and medical evacuation needs, the mission would also require significant air assets, including rotary and fixed-wing aircraft. Although the United Nations would provide communications between force and sector headquarters, a section of trained military signallers would be required to operate the equipment.

29. In order to ensure that high standards of operational procedures are taught and maintained, UNMEE headquarters would include a training cell to provide induction and ongoing training to military and civil personnel of the mission.

30. Under the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, the parties committed themselves to ensuring the freedom of movement of United Nations peacekeeping personnel. Freedom of movement would be essential for the successful implementation of the UNMEE mandate. The reconnaissance mission stressed the importance of that issue to both parties. Both Governments have appointed officers in their respective capitals to liaise with the mission. It has been agreed that UNMEE would have access to the military establishments of both parties at all levels from the capitals to the field. Freedom of movement must also include free and direct land and air passage across the lines of the temporary security zone, both North and South, for all United Nations peacekeeping personnel and OAU personnel associated with UNMEE, including free passage of United Nations support personnel and equipment.

31. Under the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Eritrea is to restore civilian administration, including police and local militia, in the temporary security zone. In that connection, it would be necessary for the implementation of the UNMEE mandate that all relevant information on militia personnel be provided to the mission to enable it to verify that the functions and configuration of the militia do not exceed that which prevailed before the outbreak of the conflict.

Mine action component

32. The presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance from recent and previous hostilities poses a significant risk throughout the conflict area, particularly in the "no man's land" that runs between the trenches along the two confrontation lines (May 1998 and May-June 2000). Dense minefields containing a mix of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines laid out more or less in "conventional patterns" contaminate trench lines. Unmarked and possibly unrecorded nuisance minefields and point targets can also be expected outside the trench lines throughout the conflict area. Both parties have reportedly removed and/or destroyed a large number of mines during the conflict or immediately thereafter. However, neither side has sufficient technical means to conduct mine clearance to international humanitarian standards, and consequently a significant residual risk remains. In addition, the risk is high of unexploded ordnance of a conventional nature in the former battle area.

33. In the light of the above, the mine/unexploded ordnance contamination in the temporary security zone and adjacent areas would pose an immediate threat to the safe deployment and operation of the peacekeeping mission, as well as to the resident and returning populations and associated humanitarian relief efforts. In the longer term, that threat, if unmitigated, could impede post-emergency rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Although the primary responsibility for demining rests with the countries concerned, the extent of the problem is beyond the current mine action capacities of each country and requires substantial support from the international community.

34. In concert with the peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is

therefore preparing a mine action assistance programme to help mitigate the threat posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Initially, the programme would have two main objectives. The first objective would be to provide and coordinate mine action in support of the operational needs of the peacekeeping force, mainly inside the temporary security zone, including the provision of technical advice to and monitoring of the mine-clearance activities of the Ethiopian and Eritrean parties. The second objective would be to facilitate and coordinate international mine action assistance in support of the humanitarian relief efforts, including the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons.

35. A mine action coordination centre would be established in UNMEE headquarters to register and process mine-related information and plan and coordinate operations aimed at fulfilling the above objectives. The coordination centre would also include two mine action liaison offices located, respectively, in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Initially, the liaison offices would act primarily as a liaison mechanism with Government authorities and the United Nations country teams in order to ensure an integrated approach to the mine action efforts.

36. The liaison offices would also prepare for the development of national mine action assistance programmes, if so requested by the parties. Those efforts would draw on existing national mine action capabilities and structures, and could take the form, if so requested by the Governments concerned, of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mine action assistance programmes in support of rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Such programmes would include the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building for mine action.

37. The mine action coordination centre would focus its activities on the coordination and provision of technical advice. For the execution of mine action operations (training, surveying, clearance and mine awareness education), the coordination centre would rely on the capacities provided by the parties, as stipulated in the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities; UNMEE military engineering resources; non-governmental organizations and commercial companies for mine/unexploded ordnance marking and clearance; and UNICEF, ICRC and NGOs for mine awareness. UNMEE military resources would, to the extent possible, support humanitarian mine action.

38. One of the first activities of the coordination centre would be to carry out a rapid mine survey of the area of the temporary security zone. In accordance with the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities no military personnel from either side are to enter the zone. However it is, indeed, the military from both parties that have the expertise to help locate, mark and clear the landmines. In that connection, UNMEE would seek the parties' concurrence to allow unarmed essential military personnel from each side into the temporary security zone for limited periods, under the strict supervision and monitoring of UNMEE, for the sole purpose of minefield survey, marking and clearance. UNMEE should be provided by the parties with all available information on areas known or suspected to be contaminated with mines/unexploded ordnance, including minefield records and technical information on mine types and laying patterns.

Public information component

39. A well-conceived and well-managed public information programme is an essential element of any successful peacekeeping operation. The objective of UNMEE's public information programme would be the widest dissemination of objective and well-balanced information on the activities and mandate of the mission and on progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. To that end, the public information activities of UNMEE would be undertaken in five distinct but coordinated forms: media relations, radio broadcast, television broadcast, publications and media monitoring.

40. An office of communications and public information would be established in UNMEE, headed by a chief of information/spokesperson. The chief of information/spokesperson and the deputy chief of information/spokesperson would conduct regular press briefings and advise the mission leadership on media policy. It would consist of two offices, one in Asmara and one in Addis Ababa. Both offices would have the capacity to undertake the necessary public information activities in Ethiopia and Eritrea. A military public information officer would also be appointed to brief the media on the military aspects of the operation, under the overall guidance of the force commander and in close cooperation with the chief of information/spokesperson.

41. Radio and television broadcast is one of the best means to reach the widest possible public in both

Ethiopia and Eritrea. In that connection, both the Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities have expressed their willingness to provide UNMEE with airtime on their national radio and television stations and to extend cooperation in production. Several privately owned radio stations in Ethiopia have also indicated their readiness to cooperate with UNMEE in broadcasting its public information messages. Adequate airtime on those stations, particularly the national radio and television in both countries, should be provided to UNMEE free of charge, to the extent possible.

Coordination with the humanitarian community

42. It is essential that close coordination be established and maintained between the activities of UNMEE and those of the United Nations country teams in the temporary security zone, and areas adjacent to it. Those efforts must recognize the existing links between the country teams, NGOs and government commissions, such as the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission and the Ethiopian Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission. A system of civil/military liaison and coordination would therefore be established, with a civil/military coordination centre located at UNMEE offices in Asmara. Cells of the coordination centre would also be established at sector and regional headquarters. The centre would ensure coordination of UNMEE activities with those of the humanitarian community in the temporary security zone, as well as security matters.

43. UNMEE would be represented at each level of the civil/military coordination centre by military liaison officers, as well as by mine action, public information, security, political and logistics personnel, as necessary. The humanitarian community, including the United Nations country teams, governmental agencies and NGOs, would also be represented at the coordination centre. My special representative would be represented in its meetings.

Deployment of the mission

44. The mission would be deployed in three phases, as follows:

(a) *Phase one.* Deployment of liaison officers to each capital to establish and maintain liaison with the parties. That phase has already begun and liaison officers have arrived in Addis Ababa and Asmara;

(b) *Phase two.* In accordance with Security Council resolution 1312 (2000), up to 100 military observers and the necessary civilian support staff would be deployed to undertake the following tasks: establish and maintain liaison with the parties in the field; visit the parties' military headquarters and other units in all areas of operation of the mission deemed necessary by the Secretary-General; establish and put into operation the mechanism for verifying the cessation of hostilities; prepare for the establishment of the Military Coordination Commission provided for in the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities; and assist in planning for the United Nations peacekeeping operation. The special representative of the Secretary-General and force commander would be appointed during this period. The necessary administrative and logistic staff, as well as essential elements of the political and public information components, the mine action coordination centre and the mine action liaison offices, would also be deployed during this phase;

(c) *Phase three.* Deployment of the full peacekeeping operation once authorized by the Security Council.

C. Coordination with the Organization of African Unity

45. Under the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, the parties requested that a peacekeeping mission be "deployed by the United Nations under the auspices of OAU" as the facilitator of the OAU Framework Agreement. The parties also called on OAU and the United Nations to act as guarantors of their commitments under the Agreement. Accordingly, the United Nations and OAU must work closely together in carrying out those tasks and facilitating the implementation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. Detailed discussions were held by the reconnaissance mission and the OAU in that regard. It was agreed that OAU would carry out two sets of functions, as follows:

(a) *Liaison functions.* Three liaison officers would be stationed in each capital during the initial stage, pending the full deployment of UNMEE. Additional OAU liaison officers might eventually be deployed. Those officers would report to OAU headquarters to keep it informed of the activities of UNMEE and of progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. In so doing, the

OAU liaison officers would maintain close contact with UNMEE and the host country's military headquarters;

(b) *Representation on the Military Coordination Commission.* OAU would have a senior representative at high-level meetings of the Military Coordination Commission. One of the OAU liaison officers would represent OAU at working-level meetings of the Commission or when Commission teams investigate complaints.

46. Cooperation with OAU would be ensured through the following means:

(a) While OAU and the United Nations would maintain separate identities and sources of funding for their respective activities, UNMEE would, to the extent possible, provide logistic assistance and the necessary security for OAU participation in joint activities;

(b) Close consultation and coordination between the United Nations and OAU would be maintained through their respective offices in Addis Ababa and Asmara;

(c) OAU capital and sector liaison officers would be welcome to join UNMEE personnel in their operational tasks;

(d) Consultations would be maintained between the head of the peacekeeping mission and senior personnel at OAU headquarters.

V. Observations and recommendations

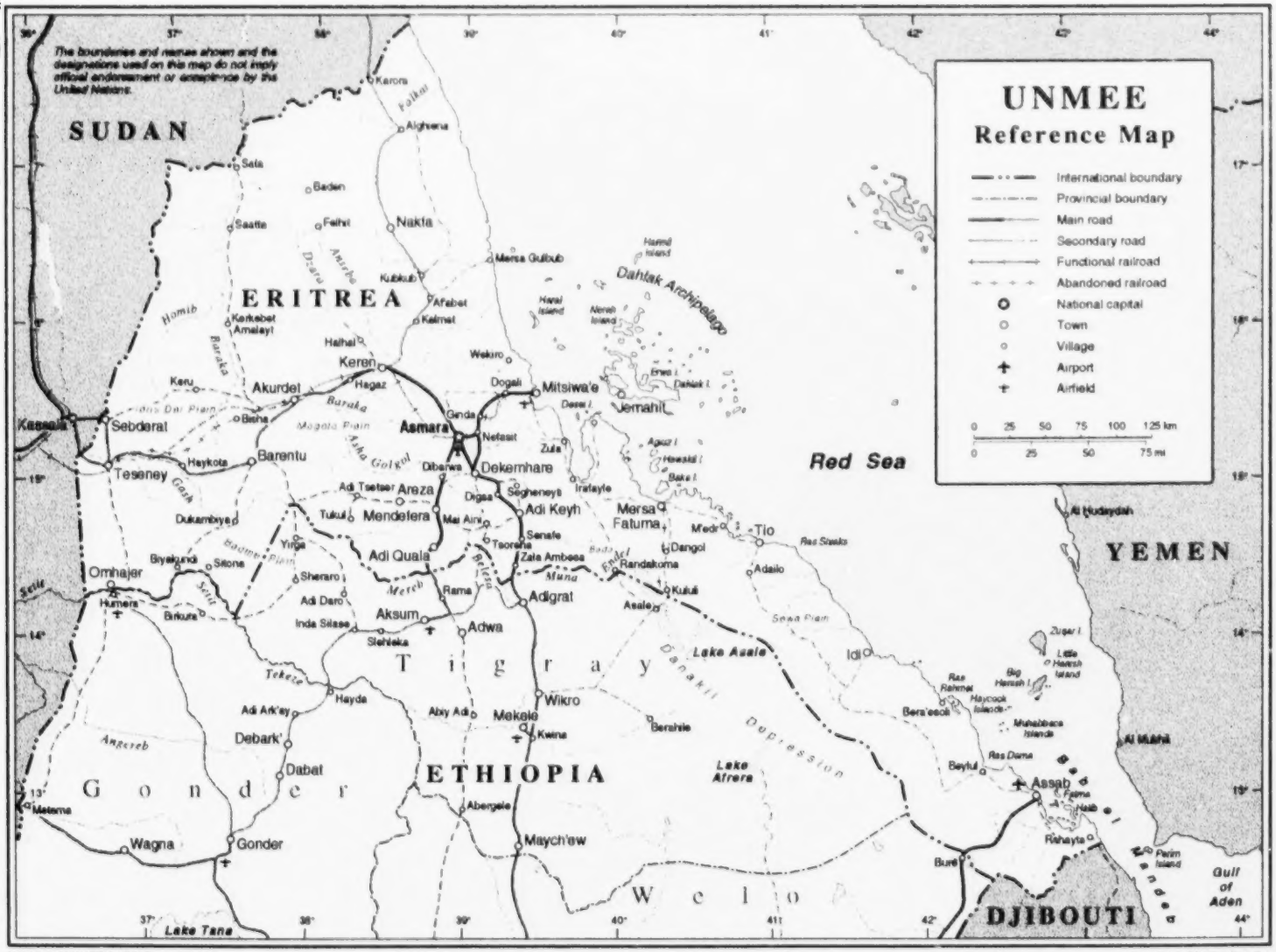
47. I should like to reiterate my commendation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and the OAU high-level delegation for its determined and sustained efforts in negotiating the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, signed by the two parties in Algiers on 18 June 2000, which constituted the first major step towards the restoration of peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The support provided by the United States and the European Union for this ultimately successful mediation effort should be commended. I warmly welcome the decision adopted by the OAU summit in Lomé to request President Bouteflika to continue those efforts.

48. I have set out in section IV above proposals regarding the expanded mandate and structure of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The proposals envisage, *inter alia*, a military force of up to 4,200 personnel, including 220 military observers, three infantry battalions and the necessary support units. The Security Council may wish to consider those proposals with a view to authorizing the expansion of the mission.

49. I count on the parties to exercise every restraint and avoid provocative moves in complying with the commitments they made under the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and to extend their full cooperation to UNMEE in the implementation of its mandate. In the days ahead, the parties are expected to cooperate with UNMEE in the expeditious establishment of the temporary security zone and the provision of the information and personnel necessary to undertake mine action activities, which are necessary for UNMEE to commence its work.

50. To date, the parties have shown the commitment required to ensure the implementation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. The full implementation of the Agreement will help create the environment necessary for the continuation of talks towards a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict. In that connection, the parties have proposed under the Agreement that the United Nations peacekeeping operation terminate with the successful conclusion of the delimitation and demarcation of the border. The international community should then continue to assist the parties in expeditiously concluding the peace process since it cannot be expected that UNMEE would be deployed indefinitely. I therefore call on the parties to sustain the political will they displayed in concluding the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, to proceed with talks on a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict, and to extend their full cooperation to the United Nations and OAU to that end.

51. The people of Eritrea and Ethiopia have suffered terrible loses during two long years of war. Their Governments have now shown the commitment to create conditions for peace and prosperity. I would like to assure the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea that UNMEE and the entire United Nations family in the two countries will make every effort to assist them in that regard. However, in the end it is only the parties themselves who can bring lasting peace to their countries.



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